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SHALL WE HAVE AN INTRODUCTORY COURSE IN SOCIAL SCIENCE?¹

The belief that some sort of general introductory course in social science should be offered Freshmen and Sophomores before they take up the specific study of economics, political science, or sociology is apparently taking definite form in the minds of a considerable number of teachers. If the idea were to be traced back to any one man we should probably hit upon Professor Small as the one chiefly responsible for it. In the second Conference on the Teaching of Economics, held in Chicago in 1911, he voiced his disapproval of the separatist spirit among social-science teachers and made the constructive suggestion that a general introductory course be worked out, with Schmoller's *Grundriss der allgemeinen Volkswirtschaftslehre* as a suggestive guide. Recently Professor Maurice Parmelee has proposed an introductory course based wholly on anthropology.² These suggestions reflect the growing feeling on the part of some, at least, of those professors and instructors who are giving thought to the educational efficiency of their departments that more co-ordination and co-operation are needed between the various social-science departments; and that we are not doing well by the student if we let him finish his undergraduate course without at least some fleeting look over the fields of the more important social sciences. We cannot expect the student to take the elementary or general courses in all the social sciences. The logical result is a demand for the development of a general survey course to be taken by the student, usually in the Freshman year, before he enters any course in a specific social-science department. Professor Bogardus, following out the idea of Professor Small, gives us an elaborate syllabus for a year's course of one hundred meetings covering about every conceivable field of social knowledge, with an

¹ *An Introduction to the Social Sciences: A Textbook Outline.* By E. S. Bogardus. (University of Southern California Publications, Vol. I, No. 1.) Published by the University, 1913. Pp. 206.

² *American Journal of Sociology*, September, 1913.

equipment of specific reading-references for each meeting, bibliographies for each subject taken up, and suggested topics for special study and report by individual students. The author's purpose is sufficiently well indicated when he tells us that "the work of teaching in the field of the social sciences is handicapped through lack of an adequate course of study that will introduce the student to the general field and at the same time give him a comprehensive outlook." He disclaims the hope of having provided the basis for such a "comprehensive" survey on the first trial and offers the syllabus in its present shape, that it may be improved as rapidly as possible through criticism from other teachers. He deserves commendation for this attitude, much as we may disagree with his conception of the proper content of the proposed introductory course; for it stands to reason that any plan for such a course has a very hard row to hoe, that it will be extremely difficult if not impossible to get the teachers of different social sciences to agree on its general content and emphasis, and that anything like a satisfactory and usable syllabus could be worked out in the end only through frank criticism and co-operation on the part of men in the various fields. In thus offering up his own attempt for searching criticism Professor Bogardus may be performing a signal service in the cause of social-science teaching.

The course is designed for Freshmen or Sophomores, who are to take it as a prerequisite to all other courses in the social sciences. It is, the author tells us, intended to introduce the student to the whole field of social science, and also to "serve as a survey course to those students whose primary interests tend in other directions and who have time for only one course in the social-science field." This must be kept in mind in estimating the merits of the proposal. The writer of this paper has elsewhere¹ expressed disapproval of such a general survey course for students who are to take no other courses in social science, on the ground that it cannot help tending toward an extremely unfortunate superficiality of thought and attitude toward things social, and must fail to impress on the student the necessity of acquiring the knowledge he must have (if he is to be an understanding citizen) of the deep-seated and

¹ *Journal of Political Economy*, January, 1913.

fundamentally significant economic causes and forces operative in society today. This syllabus simply intensifies this conviction in the writer's mind. Professor Bogardus complains that the economist "is teaching that economics is the fundamental social science, and that all of the other social sciences are based upon and controlled by the economic desires of man." This hint that the syllabus is constructed to checkmate some of the inordinate claims of the economists seems to us admirable indication that the economists, sociologists, and political scientists need to have some heart-to-heart talks to dispel some of the misunderstanding and suspicion that lurk between the various camps. I know of no economist who is teaching what Mr. Bogardus complains of. Moreover the economists are not worrying whether their science is formally the most fundamental or not. It does not matter whether it is or not. The simple fact is, and the keenest sociologists and political scientists recognize it, that *today* most of the practical questions of public policy, of administration and legislation, and even of such matters as the stability of the family, child welfare, public health, racial prejudice, etc., are so largely economic in hue and in cause that a reasonably thorough study of economics is imperative, and that to allow a man or woman to leave college without such study is educational short-sightedness, no matter how large the student's knowledge of social psychology or anthropology or comparative constitutional history may be. No course scattered over a half-dozen fields of social science, even though it comprise a year's work, can begin to make good the lack of a solid course in economics. This is the primary reason why I cannot feel cordial toward one part of Professor Bogardus' purpose. We have too many well-meaning college graduates, filled with zeal for "social service" but lacking in knowledge of, or thought about, the economic (or other) principles which in the long run determine whether their efforts are fruitless, detrimental, or beneficial. How many "sociologically" trained young social workers and reformers, for instance, have any conception of the bearing of "Malthusianism," or of diminishing returns, upon the problems of unemployment, low wages, overcrowding, and disease? If the intention is to let this introductory course create the impression in the mind of the student that unless

he is going to be a specialist of some kind this course will give him all he needs to know about economics, government, sociology, or ethics, without going on to specific courses in these fields, the course will do as much harm as good. If, on the other hand, it is designed primarily to point the Freshman's *interest*, to get him early to recognize the desirability of serious study of society, in economics, government, and sociology courses, the project of developing an introductory course is strongly to be commended. I have long had the conviction that the Freshman year, in many colleges at least, where the work is largely prescribed, is to a large extent a wasted year, and fairly devoid of genuinely human interest to the student because he is kept grinding away at the same disciplinary and mechanical pursuits—language, composition, mathematics, outline history of political changes—which he had in high school. How often we have heard Sophomores comment with a sigh of relief upon the greater interest of their work the moment they could enter some of the courses that deal with the socio-ethical and the economico-ethical ideas and questions in which young men and women at this age delight in interesting themselves. There is *at present* real need for a Freshman course to create interest—or to give expression to pent-up latent interest—and to prepare the student to some extent for the content and method of study he will be called upon to meet and to use when in the Sophomore year or later he takes up the study of any specific social science.

The test of such a plan as that outlined by Professor Bogardus must be one of its educational economy and fitness. Several questions suggest themselves. We must judge the syllabus not only as social scientists but as teachers. It is mainly from the latter point of view that this is written. Primarily we must judge not only whether the material is well organized and well presented, with adequate machinery of bibliographies, etc., but beyond that, whether the material is chosen with reference to its fitness to the Freshman mind, and moreover whether it is *the* material that should be presented, out of all the indefinite mass that might be chosen. Those who plan such a course—if they plan with reference to the future at all—must recognize that they are undertaking a difficult and delicate task, and are in a sense between the devil and

the sea. On the one hand they must use all due care not to include in the course material better adapted to upperclassmen, and above all not to construct the course from the (relatively) mature and philosophical standpoint of the mature student or of the teacher who has devoted years of study to these fields and therefore sees relations, verities, significances, where the ordinary, uninitiated mind can see none, or at best must take them on faith and authority. The course may present a mass of matured and significant conclusions and generalizations to the underclassman; he may memorize them, he may have at the time a vivid interest in them; but they will glide out of his mind, like water off a duck, just because they *are* mature generalizations and because in the nature of things no introductory course can hope to give the data and the thought processes upon which they are based.

On the other hand the course must not be repetition of what the student already knows, or of specific content he may have been made familiar with in high school. At the present time it is safe to say that the high school has given very little that would be likely in any way to be duplicated by an introductory college course. It is the writer's belief and hope, however, that before many years have passed, even the smaller high schools will be introducing courses in social economy—which may, by the way, render unnecessary any introductory college course of the kind here contemplated. It cannot be overemphasized that today no one can plan intelligently for college students who is not thoroughly alive to the changing relations between the college and the high schools, and to the vast and rapid transformation that is taking place, and is bound to take place, in the whole educational system. It is lacking in educational perspective and in perception of the *universal* value of thoughtful teaching in the subject-matter of the social sciences, to think of our pedagogical problems as limited to the four years of undergraduate curriculum. More and more the high schools are going to give boys and girls what they need, and can profit by, as preparation for citizenship in a democracy, and more and more the place of the purely formal studies will be limited and the time for social study thereby increased. The college will have to take the students as they come; its business will be to carry them on from where

the high school has left them. We must, in other words, consider the high school and college as a unit. If then the high schools develop the teaching of simple courses in the social sciences, an introductory college course may prove non-economical and out of place. For in that case the Freshman will come prepared in interest, and to some extent in *savoir-faire* in this field (so different in its methods from language, mathematics, or natural science), to take up, on entering college, a solid course in general economics or government.

Judging the present syllabus in the light of these ideas we find comparatively little that under present conditions would be likely to cover ground already covered in high school. All of some sections, however, and parts of others appear to be merely a neat outlining of what everybody knows—with a sprinkling of facts that nobody needs to know. Take for example section 15—man's relation to the fauna and flora of the world. Here it is set forth that animals are used by man (*a*) as servants and friends, (*b*) as food, (*c*) as sources of clothing (under which rubric comes the valuable information that the "most valuable is the fur of the North Pacific sea-otter, a single skin often bringing \$1,000"). Then we have a catalogue of the uses of plants, all interesting enough, but to what purpose? It certainly suggests to us the outline for lessons in nature-study in the grades, and we cannot fathom why a college Freshman should be re-treated to this sort of thing. Similar criticism holds true for sections 4, 21, 22, 39, etc., either in whole or in part. There is all-too-frequent indulgence in platitudes graced up in the dignity of formal classification—the sort of thing that helps to induce that exasperating supercilious smile on the face of the natural scientist when sociology is called a "science" in his presence.

The shortcomings of the syllabus in this direction, however, are meager compared to those discernible in another direction. It seems to the writer that Professor Bogardus has entirely forgotten the psychology of the underclassman. He forgets that we, the teachers of sociological subjects, come to these fields with an apprehensive mass, an experience, a perspective (however imperfect) which we cannot ordinarily expect the Freshman or Sophomore to have. To present to Freshmen who have no background of con-

crete study in some social field the array of "factors" and generalizations which this syllabus presents seems a disregard of the simplest principles of pedagogy.

The syllabus is divided into twelve chapters which, after a brief introduction, outline twelve factors of social progress—geographical, biological, hygienic and eugenic, genetic, economic, political and legal, ethical and religious, aesthetic, intellectual, and "associational." The sociological reader will see in this the influence of Ross's and of Small's classifications of the "social forces." As an analytical classification and as a presentation of many of the leading generalizations in some of these fields the outline is admirable. Probably everyone who reads it will point out here and there defects—omissions, mis-emphases, etc.—in the chapter dealing with his own social science. That is a relatively unimportant matter, although it is important for the reader and critic to reduce his own personal bias to the least possible limits. The more significant consideration is that a very large portion of the matter is unsuitable both in form and substance to the purpose to which it is to be put.

It is not possible to point out all the instances of this too great generality and non-adaptation to underclassman experience, but a few examples should be noted in some detail. Take section 2—the second meeting of the course—on the "factors in the rise of the social sciences." The overawed Freshman is introduced in rapid succession to the industrial revolution, Fourier, Owen, Ruskin, Carlyle, the Christian socialists, political economy's early emphasis upon wealth-getting, "socialism in its revolutionary assaults, attempts to secure social legislation, evolution of transportation, segregation of classes, etc. We much doubt if all this will mean anything to the student next day. Turning to the chapter on the physical and geographical factors, we find eight meetings, all devoted to a large amount of generalization, based on the mature study of writers like Ellen Semple—generalizations which in themselves one need find no quarrel with, but which belong to a course in geography, and which can have little real meaning by themselves, without the data and the author's reasoning on which they are built and with the exceedingly meager reading time the

student will have at his disposal while the class is covering this part of the outline. We find, for instance, on p. 18:

- (2) Plains are not favorable to early development.
 - a. Their lack of contrasting environments, their wide extent and absence of barriers, put chains on progress.
 - b. Show a paucity of varied geographical conditions and of resulting contrasts in the population.
 - c. Larger eastern half of Europe embraced in the plains of Russia and Poland shows monotony in every aspect of human life.
 - d. Sameness leaves its stamp on everything.

To be sure the author plans to have the students read certain chapters in Semple's *Influences of Geographic Environment*, and garner examples to illustrate these generalizations, and some students will doubtless do so. But if as many students take this course as the author thinks should take it the instructor is going to run against a very practical difficulty. If the reading is to be done in library books, and that is the only supposition possible in view of the large number of books to be consulted in so many fields, only a small percentage of the class can do the reading at the proper time. There is a more fundamental objection, however. There is nothing to hang all this erudition on except the student's pure love of "scholarship" and his curiosity—the two together stimulating in him a sort of collector's instinct for the gathering of "rare and curious" articles of information. This is an objection, it is true, which some might make to higher education as a whole, at least in some of its aspects; but that does not relieve us of the duty of connecting the work of this course with the student's awakening interests in the real life and the real social problems round about him now. We need to keep as far away from useless and ill-digested academic erudition as we can: for this should be the spirit of the social-science teacher and student always—that we are studying these matters not out of the pure thirst for knowledge that actuated the stoop-shouldered mediaeval scholar or the classicist of yesteryear, but that we may dig down as quickly and surely as possible to the causes of our social relations, and the real elements of social problems, in order that we may *actively, now* (not sixty years hence) contribute to the sound advancement of progress. We

cannot afford to introduce the student in any dilettante spirit. Page 21 gives us this:

- (6) High altitudes with their long, severe winters stimulate industries in the home.
 - a. Almost everywhere native mountain industries are in a state of high development.
 - b. Consists of carved wood, artistic metal work in silver and copper, the famous Kashmir shawls, finest violin strings in the world.

By what stretch of the imagination can this be thought of significance to the American student today? A far better plan for the presentation of the geographical factors, to the writer's notion, would have been to start with a meeting or two on conservation (see section 10), a live matter in which every student can have a real and productive interest, and from that pass to the geographical influences that have been and may be operative in American history (for which Miss Semple's earlier book would be a better basis of discussion than Ratzel's anthropo-geography). We feel sure that in two or three meetings thus arranged the student would get a better suggestion of the real meaning of geographical influence than he possibly can from these eight meetings which try to cover so much ground and to state so many of the final generalizations of geographical science.

The chapter on biological factors affords further illustration of the same mistaken method and deficiency in pedagogical insight. Section 12 gives us, for instance, (1) the ways in which organisms differ from inorganic substances, (2) the different phases of universal evolution, (3) the factors at work in organic evolution (i.e., multiplication in geometrical ratio, heredity, struggle for existence, etc.). Section 13 continues the study of heredity and bravely assails the ramparts of Mendelism and of biometry, while section 14 goes on with variation, variability, and mutations—and the net result of the three meetings will, we predict, be hopeless haze and confusion in the student's ideas. It seems fairly obvious that in such a course there does not begin to be time enough to discuss such matters, and even if there were they are beyond the understanding of Freshmen, with the possible exception of those who have had extraordinarily good training in biology in high

school. Far better results would be obtained in the way of "orientation" with regard to the significance of biological factors and stimulation to the study of biology or biological sociology, if for these meetings dealing with matters beyond the power of the student we substitute an informal lecture or two on the lives, the work, and the influence of the great evolutionists, e.g., Darwin, Huxley, and Weismann. Sections 17 (the biological basis of the social instincts and impulses) and 18 (self-preservation impulses) are both far too philosophical for such a course. Other overly ambitious sections are 49 (significance of recent social movements), because no one can undertake to discuss this to Freshmen intelligibly in one hour, 51, 52, 53 (generalizations about the origin, development, and functions of the state), 56 (sociological foundations of law), 58 (international law), and so on.

We doubt if such subjects as "the anti-social teachings of Mohammedanism," "the earliest expression of the aesthetic feelings," "the social power of the imagination and the feelings as expressed through poetry," "the psychological basis of intellectual factors of progress," are the best subjects to choose to give to Freshmen, even were they developed in the most concrete manner possible. Professor Bogardus shows great unevenness in this respect. Many of his subjects are admirably chosen for such a course, and are well and suggestively outlined, as for instance sections 10 (conservation), 19 (social waste through bacterial disease), and 20 (overwork and fatigue).

The author throughout uses two methods of approach, the anthropological and the historical. The anthropological approach undoubtedly has its uses but we should avail ourselves of them sparingly, else too much valuable time and energy will be consumed in the discussion of origins which, after all is said, have often only a very remote bearing on the social relations of today. No doubt, for instance, anthropological study gives the student a desirable background for an understanding of the ethics of sex, the family, modesty, marriage, etc., but on the other hand, all the monumental labor that has been expended in trying to decipher the nature of the primitive family has served not much more practical purpose (beyond serving as an example of the relativity of

morals) than the old long-drawn-out controversy between the advocates and the opponents of the theory of communal land ownership among the ancient Germans has served in solving the problems of land taxation and private ownership today. If we have more study in the present tense we shall have fewer student blue books written in the past tense—as if all that a student can study in college must necessarily relate to the past or have been said or done by someone dead at least half a century! The essential objection to the anthropological attack is that it is scholastic, time-consuming, and not adapted to stimulate live present interest in the real content of the life of today and tomorrow. And where we are forced to the conclusion, as Professor Parmelee is forced, in his article above noted, that the anthropological introduction needs an ethnological museum as reinforcement, the whole idea of an introductory course based on anthropology becomes at once absurdly impractical.

Much more can be said in favor of the historical approach. But there are ways, and ways, of using it. Where it means, as with Professor Bogardus it often does, the analytical presentation of a series of “epochs” or periods it is merely a variation of the method of abstract analysis and presentation of generalizations criticized above. (Note, for example, sections 2, 25, 30, 31, 40, 42, 46, 50, 52, 58, 82, 96.) Such history, we believe, benefits no one permanently, and will fail to satisfy the pedagogical demands of the history teachers. Sometimes the historical method in the author’s hands gives us banalities, sometimes insignificant generalities. Rarely does he succeed in making it illuminating—the real guide it should be for the student mind, from the significant modern beginnings of movements and tendencies which have, thus far, resulted in the present conditions and problems which the social science student should get at as quickly as is consistent with the attainment of that historical perspective necessary for even a preliminary study of most elements of social life. Unless we utilize history in this way we are not using it economically or effectively. To outline the abstract epochs of American laboring-class history or of transportation history in the United States is not necessarily to lead to any understanding of the significance of the modern labor

problem or the present-day unrest with regard to railway rates and governmental regulation. Nor will telling the student that the first period of international law "extends from the earliest times to the establishment of the universal dominion of Rome," that the second ends with the Reformation, and that the third extends from the Reformation to the present time give the student any suggestion of what international law is like. If it is desirable to go into the history of international law, how much more interesting it would be to spend the hour on Hugo Grotius and *De jure belli*, the Alabama claims, and the non-recognition of Huerta! The historical method in this course should keep as far away from philosophical generalization or analytical epoch-marking as possible, and rather run a clear, swift current in the main channel to the outcome in modern relations, forces, conditions, or problems to which it seems feasible or worth while to introduce the Freshman in a preliminary way. If this view be correct, the author would have done well to omit the ambitious matter on the history of economic theory, and the epochal analysis of labor, transportation, theories of state function, etc., and substituted a sequence of meetings beginning with the industrial revolution, and passing to the French revolution, the idea of *laissez faire*, Adam Smith and the *Wealth of Nations*, the development of factory legislation, the conditions of early American history which made individualism so prominent in fact and in theory, and so on to the economic transformations in industry, population, etc., which have changed the problems of government and of politics and made necessary a new point of view. But all this should be presented in a thoroughly concrete way which will appeal at once to the student's imagination, to his curiosity, to his knowledge of American history, and to his own experience and observation. In such a way he can be brought to see the significance of both history and the social sciences. It is not necessary "to go back to the year 1." It is essential to begin at a significant time and to come down through the changes which started at that time and which are significant in explaining the historical evolution and causation of the present state of affairs. Any other use of historical material borders on useless antiquarianism. The trail of German thoroughness does not always lead to a destination worth arriving at.

The author is not always careful in his statements. It is unfortunate that the student should get his first introduction to social science in anything like a careless or uncritical manner. On p. 167, for example, where he is discussing the public schools, the author says their primary function is to teach a sense of social responsibility, and avers that "it is anti-social to pay low wages and the school children should know it." There is more enthusiasm than science or sense in such a statement. To take a few other instances, the first section on child labor is misleading; the statement on p. 72 that "factory work makes the girl a wife and mother incapable by knowledge and training of doing her duty by her children, her home, or her husband" seems rather bald and dogmatic; so also the statements concerning the influence of Christianity on the family (p. 67), the biological factors of eugenics (p. 58), the socializing power of Christianity (p. 136).

Some fault might be found with Mr. Bogardus' reading-lists on the ground that they contain matter hardly suited to Freshmen, and with his bibliographies because of the omission of important titles and the inclusion of a number of books of very doubtful merit. At the end of each chapter the author gives a list of ten or twelve topics for investigation—the student to choose. Here again is revealed a deficient sense of the economy of study and teaching. We pick at random: The relation of sociology to Christianity; A comparison of tropical peoples with temperate peoples; The biological history of the race; History of medical science; A comparative study of mercantilism and *laissez faire* in relation to social progress—and these are topics designed for college Freshmen, normal school students, and even high-school pupils! Fortunately there are many less ambitious topics.

The chief difficulty back of Mr. Bogardus' work is that he has failed to give due consideration to the *time element in education*. At first thought an introductory course may seem bound to save time for the student by sending him into the specific social sciences in a somewhat oriented condition to take up their study. Looked at more closely, whether or not the introductory course is a real time-saver is seen to depend on a number of conditions—the length of the course, its content, and its effect on students' attitude toward

other social-science courses. If it causes a student to refrain from taking economics or political science, in the belief that he has gained from the introductory course enough general knowledge of these matters for one who is not going to be a specialist, then the course gains time at the expense of educational efficiency—and that is a real loss of time. As a matter of fact it seems probable that a very considerable number of students would be encouraged, by such a course as this, to leave college without any serious study of any one field of social science. And in so far as this is the case, the effect is deplorable. For students who can go on to other courses—as all college students can—it would seem that a half-year should be sufficient by way of general introduction. For students in high school or normal school who for any reason cannot take more work, the general course should probably cover a year—but its content should be very different from the one outlined in this syllabus. We rather think, therefore, that Mr. Bogardus has fallen between two stools in his effort to be perfectly fair to all the fields and to include them all in his survey. If he could have made his syllabus a third shorter, planned for a half-year course, and written in a more critical spirit, he would have come nearer giving us something which would save the student's time and stimulate new and intelligent interest.

It is easy to give destructive criticism of other men's constructive work, and if this review has been largely adverse in its estimate of Mr. Bogardus' work it has not been due to any lack of appreciation of the fact that the author, however mistaken we may think his method, has nevertheless started a much-needed work in putting together an outline for an introductory course. If on the basis of searching criticism and classroom trial of the present syllabus a more satisfactory and workable plan for a Freshman course in social science can be co-operatively worked out the credit for the hard and thankless pioneer work will be largely due to Professor Bogardus. He has not only seen the need, but has proceeded at no inconsiderable labor to pave the way for the fulfilment of that need.

Now lest we, while showing the steep and thorny path to heaven, ourselves tread the primrose pathway of dalliance, let us summar-

ize briefly our own notions of what the course should and should not be. (1) It should not aim to supplant for any student either the general course in economics or that in political science. (2) If economics and political science are required they should continue to be required. (3) The aim of the course should not be to give the student a smattering, superficial knowledge in all the fields, from commercial geography to comparative religion, but to stimulate, suggest, and, in some degree, direct his interests. (4) It should relieve the dun-colored monotony of the Freshman-year curriculum. (5) It should consciously build on whatever social-science study the student may have had in high school, avoiding duplication, and as the high schools offer more and more in this field, the course should undergo continuous alteration. (6) It should seek to introduce the student to some (not all) of the salient, pressing, *live* problems and relations of the day; and through the interest thus aroused lead him to see the necessity of serious, sequential study in the specific social sciences. (7) It should not go back to "social origins" except where, and to the extent that, the historical method of approach is the best and quickest way of reaching some understanding of the significance of the modern society we wish to study. And finally the course must stand in some effective relation to the Freshman's experience, and must not encourage the false pride of sterile "scholarship."

It follows that the plan of such a course must after all be comparatively elastic, and that much depends upon the personality of the teacher. There is little hope, it seems to me, at present at least, of standardizing an introductory course, even if all teachers of social science can be got to agree on the desirability of such a course at all. Nor do we want artificial standardization where there is no real standard as yet as to what is essential and elementary in social science. Moreover we perhaps need to be on our guard against the old academic notion that one pabulum for all is the only true pedagogical principle. Nevertheless I am very much inclined to think that some sort of introductory course for Freshmen is one of the next steps in advance in the teaching of the social sciences.

A. B. WOLFE